



UTAH COMMISSION ON RACIAL & ETHNIC FAIRNESS IN THE CRIMINAL & JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

BACKGROUND:

The Utah Task Force on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Legal System was commissioned by the Judicial Council on March 6, 1996, to examine issues of racial and ethnic fairness within Utah's criminal justice system.

PURPOSE:

The Utah Commission on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Criminal and Juvenile Justice System was formed to oversee, facilitate, and evaluate the implementation of Task Force recommendations directed at:

- achieving equality and justice for all people,
- encouraging implementation of equitable practices, and
- institutionalizing accountability.

The Commission served as a forum for examining progress, evaluating results, and providing public reports.

The Task Force issued a report and recommendations, as well as 2003 and 2004 implementation reports, setting out accomplishments and strategies to address ongoing challenges. These reports can be found at:

www.utcourts.gov/specproj/retaskforce
(Courts 2003).

NATIONAL LEVEL:

Nationwide, there are 29 states with task forces that examine issues of racial and ethnic fairness: AK, AZ, CA, CO, CT, DE, DC, FL, GA, HI, ID, IA, KY, LA, MA, MI, MN, NE, NV, NJ, NM, NY, OH, OR, SD, TN, TX, **UT**, and WA.

NEED:

From 1990-2000, Utah's demographics showed the ethnic community population increased by 117%, thus increasing the need for attention and accountability on the issues of fairness in the criminal and juvenile justice system (BUREAU 2000).

The commission is representative of the entire justice system and has a statutory duty to improve the operation of the justice system (Courts 2003).

2006 LEGISLATION:

The Governor's Office budget recommended funding to staff the Commission.

In the 2006 legislative session, Rep. Duane Bourdeaux (D-Salt Lake) is sponsoring HB 104 to fund staff and support the activities of the Commission on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the amount of \$122,800 (2006).